

James Wilkinson to Andrew Jackson, March 8, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JAMES WILKINSON.¹

¹ Jackson MSS., Letter-Book B, p. 14.

Headquarters, Near Natchez, March 8, 1813

Sir , I had the pleasure of receiving your favor on yesterday, under date of the first instant. I am sensible of the correctness of your observations contained in the first paragraph of it, and I am pleased with the frankness with which you speak of our respective commands.

As to the supplies from the quartermasters department, the usual and only mode of drawing them is clearly defined by the law creating that department. The Quarter master Genl., The deputy qr master Genl. and their assistant deputies, plainly shew that all supplies for an army must be drawn from them. The Regimental and Brigade Quarter masters attached to an army, are for the purpose of receiving, receipting for, and distributing such supplies as are wanted and directed by the commanding officer of the detachment. This is my understanding of the laws establishing this department.

It has been the plan pursued by me in obtaining, all supplies heretofore, and is the only one that has system, and can prevent confusion in the settlement of accounts. It has been the plan pursued by me since I have been in the limits of the department of Colo Shaumburgh, and I intend to pursue this plan until the supplies are withheld from me, thro' the regular channels, and then I must adopt such irregular ways, as will ensure them until I can advise the Secretary at War.

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I have directed my quartermasters to sign receipts in the usual form. Being ordered by the President of the United States, for the defence of the lower country, and advised that the officers of the proper department would furnish all legal, and necessary supplies, I cannot feel authorised to direct my quartermasters to sign any other receipts than those in the usual form. In the meantime accept my thanks for your very polite and friendly tender accomodations to my detachment as far as your power extends. I am truly sorry that swords for part of my Cavalry cannot be obtained, and thank you for the offer of muskets in the place of them.

Being taught at a tender age to know that a soldier without pride, never rendered beneficial services to his country, and a soldier without arms was like a Beau in a ball room without shoes, each being unprepared for action, I therefore took the precaution before I marched from Nashville to arm such of my Cavalry with good muskets who had not swords. There is no uniformity in the arms of the troops, part are composed of muskets and part of swords. My wish in asking for swords was to have uniformity in their arms, as it is very unpleasant to transfer men, from one Capt to another merely for the want of uniformity of equipments, particularly as they volunteered under the privilege of choosing their own officers.

I am happy that it [is] in your power to furnish the requisite supplies, of ammunition for my detachment. It is important to have it, in case of any sudden emergency, that no delay be occasioned for the want of it. I have noted your order respecting enlistments, and read with attention the enclosed law. The order is a proper one, and may prevent young and inexperienced officers from running into error and danger. The act enclosed refers to detached militia under the act of congress of April 10th and has no bearing or relation, to the Volunteers who have entered themselves under the acts of Feby. 6th and July 6th 1812. These are as much enlisted as any troops of the united States and as I understand the law, are expresly forbidden by the rules and articles of war, to be enlisted into any other corps and the officer knowing them to be such is liable to all the pains expressed by that article.

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I have the honor to be